

EIGHTEENTH SESSION OF THE

All-India Muslim League

DELHI—THE 29TH DECEMBER 1926.

The 18th session of the All-India Moslem League was held on the 29th December in the afternoon outside the Ajmere Gate, Delhi in a spacious and profusely decorated pandal. The attendance including about 80 delegates was in the vicinity of 500. Among the distinguished participants were Sir Abdur Rahim, Sir Mahomed Iqbal, Sir Mahomed Abdullah and Sir Rahim Bux.

The Welcome Address.

The ball was set rolling by Khan Bahadur Pirzada Muhammed Hossain, Chairman of the Reception Committee, who in the course of his speech said among other things.—

“It is only (a) when we are accused of planning restoration of Mussalman rule in India which we take to be an astute move on the part of interested parties to subject us to suspicions of the rulers and concomitant disadvantages, (b) when we are denied our fair share in the Government of the country, (c) when we find hypocritical plea of efficiency raised by Hindu friends to maintain their monopoly of offices, (d) when we find that the majority community is carrying on an intensive campaign for communal organisation in the hope of establishing Hindu Raj in India, it is but human that we should think of protection against such aggressiveness.” Continuing, he said that they must all strive to build up a composite culture, a happy and progressive Indian (as distinguished from Hindu) nation which should draw upon what is best in each of the several cultures which have found their way into the country.

Music Before Mosques.

With regard to the question of music before mosques, he said that the Government had taken a correct view of the problem in such questions and settled it by executive order. Had the Hindus followed Mahatma Gandhi's advice and left the question of routes for sacrificial animals to be determined by the goodwill of Mussalmans and not asserted an aggressive attitude, this minor issue would never have arisen. By abandoning the correct attitude suggested by Mahatma Gandhi and following a course of provocative aggressiveness, Hindu zealots had themselves postponed the settlement of this issue. Now that the question had been reduced to insistence on civil rights, once again the executive decision of the Government puts the contending parties in correct position; but he would once again draw the attention of the Indian Mussalmans to the advisability of maintaining a perfectly calm atmosphere for the exercise of their rights which must not be tainted by resentment.

Muslim's Constitutional Demands.

If India was to be a self-governing dominion of the British Commonwealth and a representative system of Government suited to the genius of the people was their goal, each constituent of the Indian Empire in federal development or otherwise must know the exact position of India. Neither unanimity of purpose nor prosecution of a common object could be possible without it. A clear statement of Muslim demands based on accepted principles of representation and self-determination must be placed on record for the acceptance of both the Government and other constituents of the Indian Empire. He suggested for discussion with this question in view the following changes :—

1. Each compact group with common interests bound by ties of common religion, language and culture (as far as possible and practicable) should be parcelled out into separate provinces to determine its own future in harmony with the larger common interests of the entire continent. Present distribution of provinces had a history of haphazard development behind it and had no rational basis to rest upon.

2. All Provinces must work out their destinies as far as their distinct interests were concerned and contribute their share in common to the Central Government.

3. There should be proportionate representation in the legislature and services.

4. An irreducible minimum of representation in legislatures by Mussalman elected by exclusively Mussalman constituencies should be guaranteed.

5. Proportion of Muslim seats in the Provinces where they are in a minority would automatically be solved. When suggestion No. (1), was given effect to it was only fair and just that where any community was in an effective majority it should retain its effective power and where it was in an ineffectual minority, adequate safeguards should be provided to protect its legitimate interests.

The basis of co-operation with either the Hindus or the Government, said the speaker, was the recognition of the irreducible minimum of Mahomedans' constitutional demands. He deplored the differences of opinion between Muslims over foreign politics which unfortunately and unwisely was being done in India.

In view of the forthcoming Royal Commission of 1929, he considered it most appropriate for the League to issue an invitation to the Central Khilafat Committee and other organisations claiming a representative character for the formation of a coalition for the purpose of the formulation of the demands of the Muslim community to be placed before the Commission. Should the Indian National Congress find it worth its while to call a Round Table Conference for the purpose of exploring the possibilities of forming a constitution acceptable to all the communities, the League should hold itself in readiness to respond to its invitation. Finally, he expressed grief at the loss of Swami Shraddhananda.

Mr. M. A. JINNAH, the outgoing President, next invited Sheikh Abdul Quadir to take the chair and reviewed briefly his connection with the League from 1919 when he was first made President. Mr. Jinnah, in introducing Sheikh Abdul Qadir to the audience, said that the latter was a man who

distinguished himself in various branches of life and rendered great services to the community and the country and the speaker had no doubt that Mr. Quadir would guide them right and under his presidentship the League would successfully go through this session.

Presidential Address.

Khan Bahadur Sheikh Abdul Qadir then rose to deliver his Presidential Address. In the course of his speech he said :—

First of all both the Congress and the League should each put its own house in order and try to bring within their respective fold all the sheep that had gone astray. Then they should both sit together and devise ways and means of acting in harmony wherever possible and of agreeing to differ in a friendly way, when such differences become inevitable. Having accomplished this, they should stand together before the coming Commission on Constitutional Reforms and make a united and vigorous demand for complete reforms. In the meanwhile, as a preparation for that, they should work hand in hand in the spheres of intellectual, economic and industrial progress.

Late Swami Shaddhananda.

The speaker next denounced Swami Shaddhananda's dastardly murder. There were many Mussalmans who differed with the Swami's religious propaganda, but he was sure they would be as sorry as others to find that a co-religionist of theirs should take it into his head to put an end to his life. No man could render a greater disservice to Islam or lend a stronger impetus to the Shuddi propaganda than he had done by this foul deed.

Communal Representation.

Touching communal representation Mr. Abdul Qadir argued for increased representation of Moslems in the Assembly and the Councils and other public bodies, and opined that the best solution of this problem would be to retain separate electorates till there was a mutual desire to give them up, or till any particular local area asked for a joint electorate. The question of employment under the State he proceeded was not merely a question of loaves and fishes but a question of power, opportunity and of training. The vitality of this question gained still greater force in the case of Mussalmans because some other avenues of work, particularly in the line of trade or commerce, were practically beyond the reach of most of them for want of sufficient capital.

Continuing, Mr. Abdul Qadir advocated expansion of Tanzeem and Tabligh movement, and concluded by advising agriculturists to further the co-operative movement which had been remarkably successful in the Punjab.

Concluding, he said that he would have liked to touch upon two questions which he considered were very important. Those were the South African question and the Sandhurst Committee, but he hoped that after the questions were thrashed out by the Subjects Committee and were brought before the League he would, if necessary, express his personal views on them.

The Honorary Secretary's report for the year 1926 was then adopted and the proceedings were adjourned till next day.

Proceedings and Resolutions.

2ND DAY—THE 30TH DECEMBER 1926.

Seven resolutions were unanimously passed when the League re-assembled on this day. The attendance slightly improved upon that of the previous day. The first three resolutions expressed grief at the demise of Nawab Imadul Mulk Syed Hussain Bilgrami, a Muslim leader, Mr. Khawaja Yousuf Shah, member of the Moslem League, and on the murder of Swami Shraddhanand and the consequent injuries inflicted upon a Moslem who died later on.

4.—Indians in South Africa.

Sir Abdur RAHIM then moved the fourth resolution which deplored disabilities under which Indians in South Africa were already placed by anti-Indian legislation and regretted the proposal for fresh legislation which if sanctioned by the South African Parliament, would make the position of Indians intolerable in South Africa. The League earnestly hoped that the proceedings of the Round Table Conference now in progress would result in a just and equitable settlement and the establishment of friendly understanding between India and South Africa, removing the cause of the most serious conflict between the two countries.

The mover said that it was inadvisable to utter anything which would tend to strain the relations between Indians and South Africans and thus make the work of the Round Table Conference difficult. Their attempt should be to smooth and pave the way for favourable settlement of the question. He, however, was of opinion that a favourable settlement might be arrived at and the serious and disgraceful disabilities which were imposed upon the Indians in South Africa removed, and no one could deny that justice required that they should have all the rights of citizenship which other South Africans enjoyed. Concluding, Sir Abdur Rahim said:—"We cannot allow our men to be treated as so many primitives."

Mr. Malik Bakrat ALI supporting the resolution, trusted that the Round Table Conference would find an acceptable solution of the most serious question.

Mr. Syed HABIB, said that in the Imperial Conferences it was repeatedly uttered that there was no colour differentiation amongst the inhabitants of the various British Dominions. This was only in theory and not in practice. Englishmen wanted that the Chinese should allow them to live and trade in China. They wanted this from a foreign country, but they could not vouchsafe the same privilege to a section of the people of their Empire. He was, however, inclined to think that the Round Table Conference could never succeed. If it did not he would demand of the Indians to rise to the occasion by doing some practical work.

The resolution was then put and carried without opposition.

5.—Muslim Representation in Government.

Mr. Mirza ALI moved the next resolution which emphatically declared it necessary that there should be adequate Muslim representation in the Central and Provincial Governments in India and demanded that, wherever such representation did not exist at present, the defect should

be made good at the earliest possible opportunity. The mover opined that unless Mahomedans were properly represented in the Cabinet of the country and unless they had their proper representation in the higher services, it would not be possible for them to make that advance which was their right to make. He declared with emphasis that Muslim efficiency was second to none. Therefore, if they were given chances to hold higher offices, their efficiency would as a natural course increase.

The resolution was carried amid acclamation.

6. — Ministry in the Punjab.

Mr. Din MAHOMED moved the penultimate resolution which deplored the absence of a Muslim from the Punjab Ministry and registered the necessity of having at least one Muslim Minister in the transferred departments of the Province. He explained how, in spite of an adequate number of seats in the Punjab Council being allotted to the Muslims, the Hindus managed along with the Sikhs to form a majority. Thus, it was impossible for the Muslims in the Council to either defeat the Hindus or the Government. Therefore, they were in a very weak position. Thus, it was incumbent upon the Government to safeguard their interests by appointing a Muslim Minister. He alluded to the interests of the Muslims being sacrificed by the outgoing Ministry. In this connection, he instanced the appointment of five non-Muslim Indian medical servants from the Punjab. He recommended that out of the two Ministers one should be a Muslim.

Sir Abdur RAHIM said that when as many as 36 men of one community made a unanimous demand that a representative of their community should be in charge of one of the portfolios in the transferred departments it seemed to him that the Local Government would find its hands forced to recognise the demand. The law was sufficiently elastic and the Governor could appoint a Muslim Minister in addition to the two already existing. Then it would be far better as the three communities of the province namely Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims would be represented in the Ministry. He was sure that Sir Malcolm Hailey would not like the experiment of Bengal being repeated in the Punjab.

Dr. Safaat Amed KHAN said that his argument in favour of the appointment of a Muslim Minister was not one of loaves and fishes, but it was that of the restoration of the confidence of a community in the Government. He therefore trusted that no one would object to the resolution which when put was carried unanimously.

7. — The Bengal Detenues.

The last resolution on this day urging the Government to release the Bengal detenues or to put them under trial without further delay was moved by Mr. Chagla of Bombay. Mr. Chagla said that in England the question of elementary and fundamental rights of the people was regarded as most sacred, yet it was denied in a part of its Empire. There was not a single responsible organisation in the country which had not put forward this demand. In defence of their action, the Government have two reasons. One was that since the detention of these prisoners dacoities in Bengal had disappeared. His reply to this was that the argument was the most dangerous one. The Government could the next time arrest all the leaders to

do away with communal strifes and yet put forward the same argument. The next argument was that no one would come forward to give evidence against the detenues. This difficulty existed in other countries, including England; but they had not detained men in this way. British politicians wanted Indians to co-operate but to their disappointment they did not find many co-operating with them. The Swaraj Party was not for obstruction. Let the Government either release the detenues or give them a chance for trial.

Mr. Mahomed YAKUB said that there was a large number of high officials in the C.I.D. who enjoyed fat salaries from public money but they had not been able to make up a case against these detenues. This showed that all the boast of efficiency of the department was a farce.

The resolution was eventually carried without dissent and the meeting adjourned.

3RD DAY—THE 31ST DECEMBER 1926.

The League reassembled for the third time on the 31st December in the morning and adopted four resolutions. Attendance was smaller than that of the previous day but a large number of prominent Mahomedans were present.

8.—Sandhurst Committee's Report.

Maulvi Mahomed YAKUB, moved a resolution urging upon the Government the necessity of publishing the report of the Sandhurst Committee with a view to giving the Legislative Assembly an opportunity to consider it in the Delhi Session and trusting that the Government would take early action in the direction of accelerating the Indianisation of the Army.

Mirza Itjaz Hussain of Delhi, in supporting the resolution, said that Mahomedans were more concerned about Indianisation of the Army, because they were more fit for this kind of service. The resolution was carried unanimously.

9.—The Statutory Commission.

Mr. Malik Barkatali of Lahore next moved that the Muslim community should be properly represented on the Statutory Commission when it was appointed. The mover, in a long speech, dealt with the necessity of the appointment of a Muslim who could command confidence of the whole community. The resolution was passed without much discussion.

10.—Reforms for N. W. F. Province.

Mr. Abdul AZIZ next moved a resolution urging on the Government to introduce reforms in the North-West Frontier Province immediately. The mover said that in the India Office and in England, a wrong notion was spread that the inhabitants of the Province were Afridis. This was entirely wrong. He took an opportunity of explaining to Lord Morley that it was not so. He pointed out that such demand was made by the Muslim League, the Assembly and other organisations more than once; yet the Government had not taken any action. The people of the North-West Frontier province, he emphasised, were in no way inferior to the inhabitants of any other province. They were on the other hand remarkably superior in physical strength.

Mr. Sayid Kaim Shah, in supporting the resolution, said that the inhabitants of the province in general and Kashmir, in particular, would not be satisfied if the reforms were not introduced forthwith. He maintained that they were not inferior educationally to any other province. The Punjab was not prepared to take them in. Therefore the only course was to fight for Reforms.

Mr. L. K. Hyder said that it was not desirable to amalgamate the province with the Punjab. There must be a frontier province. He referred to the notion amongst certain people that if Reforms were given to the province they would look beyond the Khyber pass. This he said was entirely wrong. If ever there was a province in which there was homogeneity of language, religion and race it was in the North-west Frontier Province. Therefore from all points of view it was the only province for Reforms. Another argument put forward by the opposition was that the financial position of the

province was not sufficient to withstand any foreign invasion. Defence he said was a non-provincial question. It was an All-India question and should not be expected to be met from the finance of any particular province.

Sir Abdur Rahim said that as there was unanimity of opinion amongst the Muslims that the Frontier Province should get reforms, he hoped that the Government of India would consider the question carefully.

Malik Barkat Ali of the Punjab and Mirza Ali Mahomed of Bombay voicing the sentiments of their co-religionists in their respective provinces emphasised the necessity of giving reforms to the North-West Frontier Province immediately. The resolution was eventually put to vote and carried.

At this time the League adjourned for lunch, but met again in the afternoon when some important business was transacted and the meeting was adjourned *sine die*. The most important resolution of the session was moved by Mr. M. A. Jinnah as follows:—

11.—The Reforms and Representation.

"That the All-India Muslim League has repeatedly defined its position with regard to real advance in the future constitution of India in its sessions in 1924 and 1925 and reaffirms the resolution passed at its session at Aligarh in December 1925 to the following effect, namely, that whereas the speedy attainment of full responsible Government is one of the declared objects of the League and it is now generally felt and recognised that the conception of Swaraj should be translated into the realm of practical politics, and whereas it is the declared policy of the British Government also to enable the people of India to take a decisive part in the moulding of their own destinies which is marked by the declaration of August 1917 and the enactment of 1919 which formed a definite epoch in the history of India as a herald of the time when India will possess full autonomy and will rank as an equal with the Dominions and with the United Kingdom itself as a member of the British Commonwealth;

"The All-India Muslim League is of opinion that the present constitution of India must be amended and urges that for this purpose the Government should undertake a revision of the Government of India Act 1919 and without any delay, appoint a Royal Commission to formulate, after due enquiry and investigation, a scheme so as to place the Indian constitution on a sound and permanent basis with provisions for automatic progress to establish full responsible Government in India and thereby secure stability in the Government and willing co-operation of the people;

"Provided, however, that for any scheme of the future constitution of India, the All-India Muslim League reaffirms and unequivocally declares that the following basic and fundamental principles must be secured and guaranteed namely, (1) All legislatures of the country and other elected bodies be constituted on a definite principle of adequate and effective representation of the minorities in every province without reducing the majority in any province to a minority or to an equality; (2) representation of communal groups shall continue to be by means of separate electorates as at present provided that it shall be open to any community at any time to abandon its separate electorate in favour of a joint electorate; and (3) the territorial re-distribution that might at any time be necessary shall not in any way affect the Muslim majority in the Punjab, Bengal, and North-West Frontier Provinces; (4) full religious liberty, that is, liberty of belief, worship, observances, propaganda, association and education, shall be guaranteed to all communities, (5) no bill or resolution or any part thereof shall be passed in any legislature or in any other elected body of three-fourths of the members of any community if that particular body oppose such a Bill or resolution or part thereof on the ground that it would be injurious to the interests of that community or in the alternative such other method is devised as may be found feasible and practicable to deal with such a case.

"The League hereby appoints a Committee of the following gentlemen as the Central Committee in order to formulate a scheme so far as possible in consultation with a Committee or committees that may be appointed by other political organisations and to report the same to the Council of the League for the consideration of the League and for submission to the Royal Commission when it is appointed. The League also appoints provincial committees with power to add to their number to prepare and define a scheme of future reforms to be submitted to the Central Committee for their consideration."

[The following are the members of the Central Committee referred to above: (1) Mr. Jinnah, (2) Sir Abdur Rahim, (3) Mr. Abdul Aziz, (4) Sir Mahomed Shafi, (5) Sheikh Abdul Qadir, (6) Maulvi Mahomed Yakub, (7) Sir Ali Imam, (8) Mr. Mahomed Hussain and (9) Sir Abdul Qayyum.]

Mr. JINNAH, in moving the resolution, made a long speech. He said that the resolution laid down as the first proposition that the League desired that the Government of India Act 1919 must be amended and that a definite advance of a democratic character must be made. The Mahomedans were not in agreement with any policy of non-co-operation with the Government nor did they sanction the policy of obstruction or of making the reforms impossible. From the last elections, it was clear that the Muslims wished to work the Reforms for what they were worth. They were anxious to see that their future position in the country was thoroughly defined and secured.

Reverting to the Lucknow Pact he said that it was not made by their request. The initiative came from the National Congress: although there were differences of opinion, he thought that the Pact was the finest temporary solution of the difficulties. He then referred to the Congress point of view on the subject of the Mahomedan position in the country and said that it was far from assuring. No responsible Congressman or Hindu leader had come forward with a concrete proposal with regard to the future of the Mahomedan community. Individual pronouncements were, however, made by one person or other; nothing definite was forthcoming. There was no escaping away from the fact, communalism did exist in the country. By mere talk and sentiment it could not be removed. Nationalism could not be created by having a mixed electorate. The history of Canada showed that a separate electorate system did not prove an obstacle in the progress of representative government. He earnestly appealed to the leaders of the Congress and the Hindu Mahasabha to accept the hand of friendship and fellowship of the Mahomedan community, to meet, confer and exchange views in real seriousness to find out a solution. A resolution to the effect which he was moving to-day was sent in 1924 to the Secretaries of the Congress, but no encouraging reply was received by the League. He appealed to the Muslims and Hindu leaders to let the past be forgotten and the hatchet be buried and meet in a spirit of friendship and fellowship for formulating a common demand. "We desire nothing else but justice and fairness and I assure you that if we, the two communities, can settle our differences, it will be more than half work for responsible Government won. But if, unfortunately, there is going to be a failure and it is our misfortune that we cannot come to a settlement, the next course open to the Mahomedans is that we must prepare our case for placing before the Royal Commission and fight the battle." If the Royal Commission did not satisfy the Mahomedans, they could carry their struggle to the highest tribunal. They would maintain that a principle which was sacred and was a matter of life and death to them must be secured; but he hoped that there was brighter future for the Moslems. He hoped that better minds amongst the Muslims and Hindus will realise that the only course for India was to work in friendship, harmony and co-operation. He hoped that India would rise to that nationhood for which they were aspiring.

A number of speakers then voiced the same sentiment as that of Mr. Jinnah. Dr. Kitchlew said that once the principle of the resolution was accepted by the Hindus, all mistrust amongst the two communities would disappear. On account of their numerical strength, it was for the Hindus to rise to the occasion and by pleasing the Muslims to win their hearts.

Sir Abdur Rahim said that it was impossible to imagine that the Muslim community in India should be satisfied with being relegated to a position of political insignificance under any Government. With regard to the question of the electorate, he said that the principles which were applicable to the conditions in England or other Western democratic Governments were not applicable to the peculiar conditions in India. In some quarters it was stated that Mahomedans returned to the Council through separate electorates were less patriotic and nationalist in outlook. He instanced the case of Bengal and said that the fear was an erroneous one. Mahomedans in the Councils were as earnest set of workers in the case of political advancement of the country as anybody else. If representative Government was required in the country, it was only essential that separate electorates should be continued. Otherwise the Legislatures would no longer be representative. A Government official exercised great influence on the progress of his community. If seventy million Mahomedans were denied a proper share of the administration, it was not possible for them to protect their interests and to advance their cause. Concluding, the speaker emphasised that it was the unanimous desire of the community to have adequate representation in the services and have their own electorate.

Three more speakers expressed their views and the resolution was eventually carried amidst cheers. The proceedings of the League then came to a close.